

KEEPING YOU POSTED

Newsletter of the United Church of Christ

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SOUTH AFRICA ACTION UCC Steps Up Mobilization

The UCC South Africa divestment announcement implementation committee is stepping up anti-apartheid work through its new network to mobilize church members.

The UCC Mobilization Network on Southern Africa, composed of implementation committee members and representatives of other UCC groups supporting the pronouncement, will enable the church to mobilize members, state-by-state.

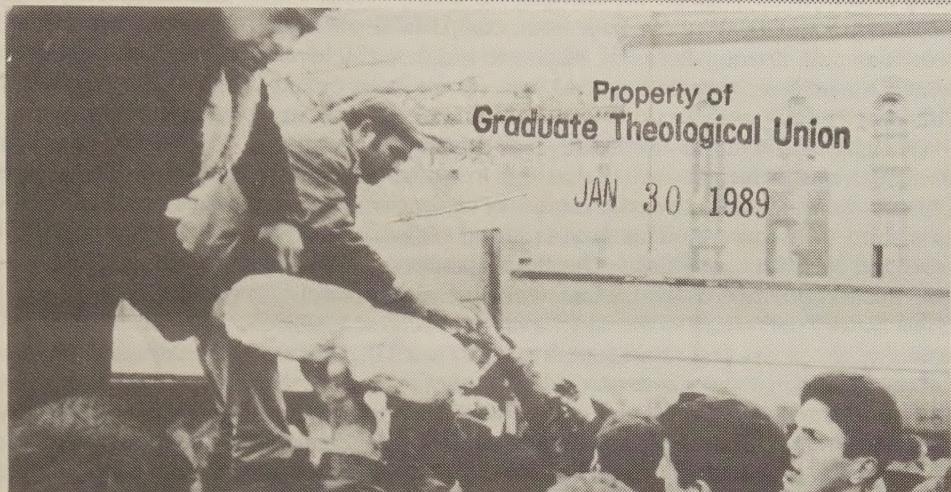
Last year, stricter economic sanctions against South Africa passed in the House of Representatives, but died in the Senate in the absence of constituent pressure. Commission for Racial Justice executive director Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. says the UCC is committed to the abolition of apartheid, "but leg work is needed to make it happen. The committee saw the need for a network to mobilize in target areas."

United Black Christians was the first group to join the network administered by CRJ and UC Board for World Ministries.

Meanwhile, a National Council of Churches-convened group is responding to South Africa's persecution of the church with a "Stand for Truth: Free South Africa" campaign.

In Phase I of the campaign, "From Pentecost (May 15) to Soweto" (Day, June 6), local U.S. churches can sign covenants that commit them to activism until South Africa is free." Teach-ins, worship services and actions will be held across the country, especially on Soweto Day. Speaking tours for South Africans are planned.

Contact the UCC Mobilization Network on Southern Africa at UCBWM, World Issues Office, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115, 212-870-2186.



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Graduate Theological Union

JAN 30 1989

Earthquake survivors reach for loaves of bread being distributed.
(Photo by RNS.)

Relief Funds Aid Armenia, Need Boost

UC Board for World Ministries has shuttled \$10,000 of UCC disaster relief funds to Armenian earthquake victims through Church World Service, reports Lloyd Van Vactor, associate general secretary of the World Board's mission unit.

So far, CWS has sent \$813,000 in medical relief assistance to Armenia in a coordinated effort with and through Armenian churches. The agency has issued a \$1 million appeal for further response.

The UCC is able to respond to such emergencies quickly because of church relief fund reserves, most of which come from the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. (see page 4). However, church relief coffers are now strained in the wake of the tidal wave of natural disasters that struck the earth last year. The UCC gave \$92,000 during the last quarter of 1988 in response to hurricanes, floods and earthquakes in Jamaica, Bangladesh, India, Kampuchea and Nepal.

COCU Votes 'Unity Without Uniformity'

A proposal that could resolve a 28-year quest for unity among some of the major U.S. Protestant churches was approved at the 17th plenary of the Consultation on Church Union in New Orleans in Dec.

The proposal would permit joint worship and ordination while allowing churches to retain their own government and structure. The UCC will vote on a consensus statement outlining the proposal's theological basis at General Synod 17, but on the actual

proposal at a later date.

The proposed "covenant communion," characterized as "unity without uniformity," forgoes church mergers, but would call on churches to add "Church of Christ Uniting" to their names.

The statement charges that racism and sexism are "idolatries" in the church and calls for a "truly inclusive" church that expresses special concern for the poor, the weak, the disabled, the oppressed and others not fully accepted in society.

In other business, UCC Rocky Mountain Conference minister Clyde H. Miller, Jr. was elected secretary of COCU.



Clyde H. Miller, Jr.

The Integrity of Reality

By Kit Wilke

I prefer a good joke to poetry, moving poetry to fiction and a thriller to theology any day. But I am too deeply in need of freedom and grace to avoid the subject. Faith is far too intimate and existential to me to mean anything as vague as beliefs. In my life, faith is the decision to trust the integrity of reality. Not the reality we experience but another reality behind experience. Though the integrity to reality seems to be beyond human knowing, we have been comfortable with such words as *God, Creator, Father or Mother* to indicate the level at which we believe in its trustworthiness. Some have called it Yahweh: "I am."

Our decision to trust that reality has an integrity which is benign is based on our belief that the love shown in Jesus Christ is connected to the true nature of reality as intimately as a child to its parent. This faith is based on what we have read and heard about Jesus. The Bible is interested in little else but to convince us of the trustworthiness of Yahweh. It is not history presented to the mind so much as emotive stories aimed at the heart and mind together. But our faith also involves the experience of overwhelming love in prayer, worship and the unexpected workings of the world, especially moments of inclusion after experiences of rejection, of freedom after slavery, grace after judgment. We experience rejection, yet another level of reality breaks briefly into our experience, showing us behind the multiplicity of our experience an integrity whose nature is not rejection but love. Nor is this a

separate reality. Reality is one, however various our experience of it.

But how unique is Christianity? Like most religions throughout history, it has trusted only rarely in this integrity of reality. Instead, it trusts its own definition of reality. Most religions seem to function that way. What one trusts are the customs and traditions of one's own group--the patterns and mores given you. As long as they are helpful in navigating through experience these patterns and mores are vital. When, however, one encounters an experience in which these patterns are not helpful, religion faces two choices: seek a creative new pattern of response--a new morality--despite its dangers or blame the anomaly on someone or something else--the witch, blasphemer or oddball. When this second option is chosen, our belief in reality's integrity is abandoned. Our faith is instead in our own mores and our own limited understanding. We are not ready to let new occasions teach us new duties.

When Christ enables us to trust the goodness of the integrity of reality--as opposed to the reality of our mores, and preconceptions--then we are faithful. But where Muslim, Hebrew, Buddhist or Communist traditions open people to trust in such a deeper reality, are they not also faithful? What is essential is trusting the integrity behind experience. That is the faith of the Bible.

Kit Wilke, pastor of Edgewood Congregational UCC, Cranston, RI, is president of the Rhode Island Conference.

Priorities Reports

Spiritual Renewal



(Photo by Kenneth Swartz III)

The silence of northern Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area helped 14 adult members of EDWARDS CONGREGATIONAL UCC, Davenport, IA, meditate and talk about faith, life and vocation, says pastor Daniel Schmiechen. Christianity, families, work

and ethics came up in conversations around campfires, in canoes and while fishing and preparing meals. There was also time for solitude and group prayer.

Kitchen, serving about 300 breakfasts a day.

Youth/Young Adult Ministries

Robert Thaden, pastor of POWDER RIVER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC, Broadus, MT, faced controversy when--after the town high school suffered three suicides in 20 months--he wrote a play addressing the issue. "Love Me Till I Die" involves a teenager, who has committed suicide, watching the future unfold. The boy sees the pain his death caused and discovers that his girl's cancer diagnosis, which catapulted him to depression, was incorrect. Still, the one-hour musical was banned from being performed at the school.

Justice and Peace

The Just Peace Committee of THE COMMUNITY CHURCH, Vero Beach, FL, each year gives a peace prize--cash and plaque--to a Vero Beach High School student singled out by teachers and peers. The 1988 prize went to a junior, Louise Grafstrom, for her skills in conflict resolution.

OPPOSING VIEW

In Dec., KYP reported that the average age of seminarians is rising.

LYMAN G. FARRAR, pastor of Lakewood Congregational UCC, Lakewood, OH, is concerned about that trend. "Where are the bright single men and women in their 20's, many of whom have grown up in the church and served on boards and committees? They are not in our seminaries. This is a cause for real concern for the future of ministry in the UCC. I am not against second career men and women preparing for the Christian ministry. I am for recruiting some of our brightest and best college students in their 20's for ministry."

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The Homeless Poor

The Washington Post has called FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC, Washington, DC, "one of the few institutions in the city that keeps its doors open so homeless people can use its facilities." The church has a dinner program for homeless women and has been home for a year now to Zacchaeus Community

last year, the youth and young adults at FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC, Angola, IN, celebrated St. Valentine's Day with a forum on capital punishment. It believed that St. Valentine was martyred in Rome in 270 A.D. for performing marriages, outlawed as family ties were said to make soldiers less willing to fight. This year it will host a forum on marriage.

Clergy Retirement Focus of New Book

Pastors plan well, retirement can be a meaningful, fulfilling part of their lives, says a Pilgrim Press book on *Planning for Ministerial Retirement* by Robert G. Kemper.

When planning for retirement, clergy face issues unique to their profession, says Mr. Kemper. "Retired pastors often obtain their own housing for the first time. This can be difficult, as they usually lived in parsonages or were given housing allowances when they were active pastors," he explains.

Also, Mr. Kemper points out, pastors are well-respected religious and civic leaders in their communities, "but when they retire, they lose the status that they had as parish ministers. They must learn to cope with this lack of status."

Other questions addressed in the book include: Should a pastor move to another city upon retirement? What are some ways for a former pastor to remain part of a congregation?

"Retired ministers often are helpful church members who work well with the church's present pastor," says Mr. Kemper. "But they need to remember that they no longer serve as the congregation's minister."

The book, which received support from the UCC Pension Boards, explains the financial benefits available to retired pastors. Mr. Kemper, a UCC pastor, is a consultant with the Pension Boards, and got some of the material for this book from seminars in pre-retirement planning which he conducts for the national church agency.

The book calls upon the UCC to honor retired pastors by establishing a special category called "ministers-at-large."

"They should be invited to attend General Synods in this special status," advises Mr. Kemper. "Conference ministers also should seek advice from retired clergy, as they have experience in ministry."

The volume is \$6.95 from The Pilgrim Press, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001.

Hispanic Team Eyes UCC Ministry Needs

Initial results of a survey of what the UCC is and isn't doing in Hispanic ministries show a variety of creative programs sprinkled across the map but confirm the need for churchwide coordination.

Those are among the findings of the UCC's Hispanic Ministry Implementation Team. Sanctioned by General Synod 16 in 1987 and formed in 1988, the team is preparing a progress report for GS 17.

Committee members believe their task--"to initiate and develop a creative and comprehensive plan for Hispanic ministry in the UCC"--will require at least two more years of planning and evaluation, says co-chairperson Alfonso Roman of UC Board for Homeland Ministries.

As of Jan., the team was still gathering data from some parts of the church about existing ministries. The UCC has 77 congregations that are primarily Hispanic, 56 of which are in Puerto Rico. In addition, UCBHM research office records show 28 congregations with more than 10 Hispanic members and 477 parishes with from one to 10 Hispanic members.

Also, questionnaires sent out last summer drew responses from 26 of the UCC's 39 conferences and from eight national bodies. Respondents named a range of UCC-related programs affecting Hispanics, including those run by congregations, those run ecumenically with UCC participation and those funded by national UCC grants.

Among them: radio ministries in San Antonio, TX, Chicago and Rhode Island; a project in Rochester, NY to teach conflict resolution skills to Hispanic youths; advocacy and outreach through state councils of churches on issues related to immigration and farmworkers; leadership training programs, such as ones for lay and ordained people at Andover Newton Theological Seminary near Boston; Hispanic caucuses and committees in congregations and conferences; inter-conference support of and representation on the regional Western Hispanic Ministries Strategy team; and development of Spanish-language curricula in Puerto Rico.

Legal Issues, Gay Clergy on Placement Meeting Agenda

Legal issues and church attitudes toward gay ministers were among the subjects discussed by nearly 70 conference staff members at the 1988 National Ministry and Placement Consultation in Erlanger, KY, Nov. 28-Dec. 1.

The conference, convened by the UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership, also examined the use of computers in the hiring process.

UCC counsel John Redmond addressed common legal concerns of conference officers. For example, he explained, civil courts cannot intervene if a pastor's standing is revoked, as that is considered a religious matter and under separation of church and state rules. He also said placement officers had the right to reveal potentially damaging information about a pastoral candidate as a matter of "qualified privilege."

"If an applicant has a gambling problem, a former employer may reveal this fact--if a candidate's job performance is affected by the condition. A search committee has the need to know this information," he said.

Meeting in small groups, participants discussed the placement problems of pastors more than 50, women seeking a second placement, small membership

churches and lesbian and gay clergy.

"Gay and lesbian pastors who stay in the closet do so at great cost to their integrity," says Cyril Colonius, an openly gay UCC minister who addressed the group. "For too long, the church has accepted our talents but not our lives."

As the church becomes more educated around these issues, more parishes will call gay and lesbian pastors, says Mr. Colonius.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

A DIRECTOR is sought for the UCC Hunger Program. Apply by Mar. 15 to Hunger Action Management Team, c/o Chair, Charles Shelby Rooks, UC Board for Homeland Ministries, 132 W. 31st St., New York, NY 10001.

A CONFERENCE MINISTER is sought by the Minnesota Conference. Apply by Mar. 31 to Doris Underdahl, Search Committee, P.O. Box 161, Freeborn, MN 56302.

SEND NEWS stories, PHOTOS, and OPPOSING VIEWS of 100 words or less to political or social stands taken in a particular article to KYP, Office of Communication, UCC, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

News Briefs

Christic Institute Update: Two UCC Bodies Back Appeal

The Office for Church in Society and UC Board for World Ministries are backing an appeal for a lawsuit alleging U.S. participation in illegal drug trafficking to finance Nicaraguan contras. The two UCC bodies are among 10 religious groups that have filed "statements of interest" in the appeal by the Christic Institute of Washington, DC, which originally brought the suit in U.S. District Court in Miami in 1986. In 1988, Judge James Lawrence King threw out the suit. The appeal alleges that Mr. King, in doing so, made legal errors and rendered decisions beyond the scope of a trial judge.

Fast on King's Birthday Protests Pesticides

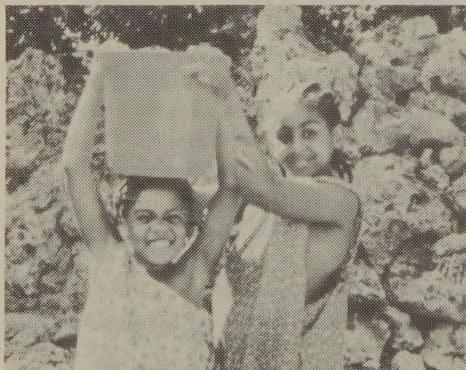
Commission for Racial Justice leaders, joined by other national staff members and at least one UCC congregation, fasted for 24 hours on Jan. 15, the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., to show support for farmworkers protesting the use of carcinogenic pesticides in California grapefields. The action was part of a "fast chain" started in 1988 by Cesar Chavez, head of the United Farm Workers Union, to call attention to the UFW's boycott of California table grapes, launched in 1984. General Synod 15 in 1985 urged UCC congregations to join the boycott. Among the Jan. 15 fasters were Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., CRJ's executive director; CRJ commissioners Gwen Dilworth of San Francisco, Virginia Liebner of St. Louis, David Seymour of Suffolk, VA, and Marilyn Burdick of Boston, NY; and members of New Fellowship UCC of Berkeley, CA.

Deadlines Near for Seminary Fellowships for Minorities

Apr. 30 is the application deadline for the Minority Fellowship Award Program, offering financial aid toward seminary. It is open to people described as members of minority groups by the U.S. Census who will commit themselves to be UCC ministers. Contact Barbara J. Essex, UC Board for Homeland Ministries, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001, 212-239-8700.

Act Now for Tickets to Special Synod Meals

It's time to buy tickets for special meal events at General Synod 17 in Fort Worth, TX, Thursday through Tuesday, June 29-July 4. Meal sponsors range from seminaries to special interest groups to health and human service institutions to national instrumentalities. Some meals will include award presentations; some will feature speeches or audio-visual programs on such topics as spiritual renewal, the UCC's racial and ethnic heritages, ministry in the 1990's and "nonviolent national defense." Prices range from \$7 to \$12.50. Delegates and registered visitors will find details in advance mailings; others may contact Paul Mitchell, UCC Secretary's Office, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.



Since 1949, One Great Hour of Sharing funds have helped people around the world to help themselves through agricultural, medical and other development projects. They also allow the UCC to respond with relief aid in cases of natural disasters. (See page 1.) Mar. 5 is suggested date.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The annual *Women and the Word Preaching Event* will be Mar. 30-31. Boston (MA) University School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Ave. 02211. Registration (\$25; students, \$5) is due Mar. 3. Call June Goudey, 617-353-3077.

Therefore, We Do Not Lose Heart is: Mar. 27-31 retreat at Kirkridge, Bangor, PA 18013. Led by William Sloane Coffey, Walter Wink and June Keener-Wink, will focus on parish outreach to the poor. Cost: \$385 (\$200 deposit).

RECOMMENDED

Inheriting Our Mothers's Garden: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective, edited by Letty M. Russell, Kwok Pui-lan, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Katie Geneva Cannon, presents the experiences with the Christian faith of African, Asian, Anglo-American and Latin American women. \$12.95. The Westminster Press, 925 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19107.

PERSONNEL CHANGE

SUSAN NEWMAN HOPKINS is now interim coordinator of church-college relations with UC Board for Homeland Ministries. Her office is in New York City.

CORRECTION

An item in KYP's Jan. "News Briefs" incorrectly states that former Rep. James Jeffords is no longer a member of the U.S. Congress. Actually, he is now a Senator and is from Vermont, not New Hampshire, as reported. Also, the brief should state that three out of six congresspersons from Colorado, not in total, are UCC members.

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